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**COMMUNITY PLANNING &
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

Creating Solutions for Our Future

Joshua Cummings, Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mineral Lands Stakeholder Group

FROM: Maya Teeple, Associate Planner

DATE: August 21, 2018

SUBJECT: Mineral Lands Designation Criteria – Public Parks and Preserves Definition

Overview of the Natural Resources Chapter

Currently, the mineral lands designation criteria in Chapter 3 of the Comprehensive plan excludes public parks and preserves, and also all areas within 1,000-feet of public parks and preserves.

- Public Parks and preserves have been excluded from the mineral lands designation criteria since August, 1993.
- Exclusion of all areas surrounding public parks and preserves within a 1,000-foot separation distance was added to the designation criteria in September, 2010.
- In 2017, the Board of County Commissioners approved an update to Comprehensive Plan to map designated mineral lands based on the approved criteria.
- A hearing was held with the Planning Commission on the scope of designation on March 7, 2018.
- On March 21, 2018, the Planning Commission recommended that staff follow the current comprehensive plan designation criteria as the scope to map the mineral lands designation (Map 1A), with the exception of co-designating Long Term Agriculture and Mineral Resource Lands. Under this recommendation, the public parks and preserve criteria remains unchanged.
- On July 24, 2018, the Board of County Commissioners recommended that staff bring the current planning commission recommendation through the public process as part of the Comprehensive Plan Update, and create policy language options which would create exceptions to allow mining in some situations within the 1,000-foot separation distance from the UGA or public park/preserves, such as when a parcel is partially designated or borders an existing mining operation. These policy options were discussed with the Mineral Lands Stakeholder Group at the May 1 and May 5th meetings.



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- Additionally, Commissioners requested that staff further define “public parks and preserves”, and how this is implemented in the county-wide designation map.

This memorandum serves to review the current definition of “public parks and preserves” in the Comprehensive Plan Mineral Lands Designation Criteria of Chapter 3, and to develop a definition and/or options regarding how “parks” are excluded from Mineral Resource Lands. The current criteria in the Comprehensive Plan for public parks and preserves states:

Public Parks and Preserves

2. Location. Designated mineral resource lands shall be separated by a distance of at least 1,000 feet from public preserves, which include parks, national wildlife refuges, state conservation areas, wild life areas, and other government owned preserves, but excluding hunting areas.

The criteria currently in the Comprehensive Plan lists several types of areas that may be considered a “park” for the purpose of Mineral Lands Designation. Some types listed have narrow definitions, whereas others may be broad:

- **Public preserve.** Generally a state, county or city owned land the harbors species or natural communities at risk.
- **Park.** Public land devoted to a specified purpose, such as recreation, boating, hiking, or resource conservation. A “county park” is defined as any area under the management or control of the commission, and includes all parks, squares, drives, parkways, trails, beaches, playgrounds and other recreational areas or facilities comprising the park and recreation system of Thurston County ([TCC 10.76.030\(3\)](#)).
 - Examples include Tolmie State Park, Millersylvania Park, McLane Nature Trail, Guerin Park, and Frye Cove Park.
- **National Wildlife Refuge.** a federally protected area of the United States managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service
 - Examples include the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually Wildlife Refuge.
- **State Conservation Areas** includes [Natural Area Preserves](#) and [Natural Resource Conservation Areas](#). ([RCW 79.71.030](#)) Land which maintain, enhances, or restores ecological systems and has low-impact public use.



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- Examples of Natural Area Preserves include Woodland Bay Natural Area, Glacial Heritage, Bald Hills Natural Area, Mima Mounds Natural Area, Rocky Prairie Natural Area and Black River Refuge.
- Examples of Natural Resource Conservation Areas include Woodard Bay Conservation Area, and Nisqually-Mashal River Park.
- **Wildlife Area.** State designated land, typically managed by WDFW, protected for habitat for fish and wildlife. Washington State has 33 designated wildlife areas.
 - Examples include Scatter Creek Wildlife Area, which includes Black River Wildlife Refuge, Davis Creek, Scatter Creek, Skookumchuck Wildlife Refuge, and West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Refuge.
- **Government Owned Preserve.** A protected area for wildlife, flora, fauna, or other features of geological or special interest owned by a government body.

The Parks layer used for the initial mineral resource lands analysis is the Thurston County “Parks” Layer. This data shows current parks, public preserves, natural areas, and undeveloped park lands for Thurston County, local cities, state, and federal ownership. The data also includes information about park amenities, size, address and owner information.

This layer includes a variety of types of parks, such as:

- Boat launches,
- Dog parks,
- Golf courses,
- Historic sites,
- Natural areas,
- Open space,
- The Evergreen State College,
- Parks,
- Preserves,
- Trailheads,
- Undeveloped parkland, and
- Wildlife areas.

Discussion Points:



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- What should be considered a “public preserve”?
 - Must the property be owned by a government entity? (ie, state, county, city)?
 - What about “preserves” owned by nonprofit or private entities, such as a land trust or a homeowner’s association?
 - Must the property be open to the public?
 - What about properties that are closed to the public to protect sensitive habitat?
 - What about undeveloped park properties that are intended to be developed in the future?
 - Do certain types of uses constitute a “preserve” and others not? (ie, lands reserved for active recreation, such as a ballfield or playground, vs lands reserved primarily for open space and habitat conservation)
 - What about government-owned trails and trailheads that are open to the public for recreation and access?
 - Should there be a minimum size or width?
 - Other considerations?